

Japanese American Citizens League

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WILLIAM J. YOSHINO
REGIONAL DIRECTOR

June 8, 1979

Mr. Ken Charlton
The Rochelle Leader
401 North Main Street
Rochelle, Illinois 61068

Dear Mr. Charlton:

I recently received a copy of your column entitled "Why pay interred (sic) Japs". The term "Japs" represents the irresponsible and reckless usage of a racial slur. Your blatant use of this term serves to demean an entire group of Americans and illustrates a total lack of sensitivity on your part.

I fully respect your right to freely express your opinion. I must, however, correct glaring errors in your column so that in the future your opinion will be more fully informed.

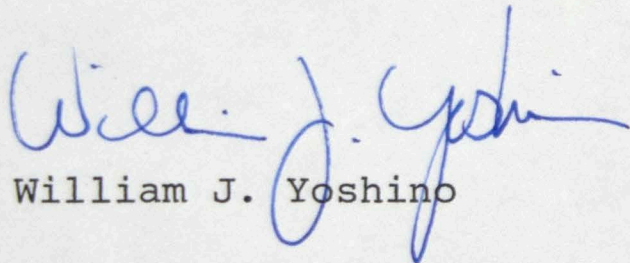
Two-thirds of the 120,000 Japanese incarcerated during the war were American citizens. The evacuation and incarceration of this group of American citizens represented the violation of basic constitutional rights, the denial of human decency, and the gross mistreatment of innocent citizens. We are dealing with Constitutional rights, Mr. Charlton. Constitutional rights are not contingent; they are not selective; they are not dismissed by your simplistic statement that "citizens of enemy nationality are usually interred (sic)." Japanese Americans were not the enemy. The fact of the matter is that Japanese Americans were expelled from the West Coast as an expedient to the prevalent racial attitudes of the time. Your statement fails to account for those citizens of German and Italian ancestry who were not herded en masse into inland concentration camps.

You further state, "Never in history has a nation considered paying money to interred (sic) people during a war." You use as an example the Jewish "death camps" in Germany. Proper research indicates that the Federal Republic of Germany has stated that restitution, both moral and material, for acts committed by the Nazis was one of the most important and urgent obligations of the German people. To date, Germany has made vast payments to both the victims of the World War II "death camps" as well as the State of Israel.

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Your lack of understanding is further illustrated by the following, "The most sickening thing about the whole matter is that Japan started the war with a sneak attack on Pearl Harbor." You miss the point completely. Japanese Americans were as shocked and abhorred by the events of December 7, 1941, as the rest of the American people. Japanese Americans had no loyalty ties to the Empire of Japan. To equate Japanese Americans with the actions of the Japanese government is a grievous disservice not only to the Japanese American community, but in particular, to those Japanese Americans who fought and died for this country not only in the European theatre, but the Pacific as well.

You conclude by stating, "There's something terribly wrong with some people in America...What is happening to us?" I shall refrain from attempting to interpret that statement outright, but I agree that perhaps in another context there is something wrong with some people in America. Sadly, I ponder the same question. What is happening to us?



William J. Yoshino

cc: Ms. Lillian Kimura, Governor
Midwest District Council, JACL

Mr. Hiroshi Tokubo, President
Chicago Chapter, JACL

Mr. John C. Tompkins, Jr.
Editor in chief
The Rochelle Leader